

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

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## **Nominations Welcomed for Wyoming Mental Health/Substance Abuse Awards**

The Wyoming Department of Health is welcoming nominations of Wyoming residents who have shown unique and extraordinary leadership in helping those who suffer because of mental illness and/or substance abuse for the 3rd Annual Starfish Awards.

“We want these awards to acknowledge those special individuals or groups who are working tirelessly to improve their own lives or the lives of others affected by mental illness and/or addictions,” said Rodger McDaniel, Wyoming Department of Health deputy director for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division.

The name of the awards is based on a story about a young boy who throws starfish back in to the ocean to keep them from dying. “The boy agrees with someone who asks that he can’t save them all, but points out that what he is doing made a huge difference to the starfish he just touched,” McDaniel said.

“The challenges and impacts caused by mental illness and substance abuse are already known,” McDaniel said. “There are also many success stories out there and they are encouraging to hear about.”

The Starfish Awards will specifically acknowledge:

- A person in recovery from substance abuse
- A person in recovery from a mental health disorder
- A substance abuse, mental health treatment and/or prevention advocate
- A public servant, which may include an elected or appointed official, judge, legislator or other public official
- A substance abuse, mental health treatment, and/or prevention program
- A community coalition
- A substance abuse therapist
- A mental health therapist
- A Wyoming youth, youth group, school, class, or individual under the age of 25 advocating or supporting recovery
- A Wyoming family or parents who are in recovery

The awards will be presented at a February 8, 2010 banquet in Cheyenne at the Little America Hotel and Resort. For details and a nomination form, visit <http://health.wyo.gov/mhsa/initiatives/starfish.html> online or call Shawna Kautzman at 1-800-535-4006. The deadline for nominations to be received is December 3.

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